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Recent Events Prove the Need for National Missile Defense

The United States is defenseless against ballistic missile attack. If 41 Senate Democrats continue to have their way, Americans will remain unprotected against any limited ballistic missile attack, whether from an accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate launch.

Recent events demand the United States move forward and deploy, as soon as technologically possible, an effective National Missile Defense (NMD) system that can defend U.S. territory against limited ballistic missile attack. That is what S. 1873, the American Missile Protection Act, would require.

The Proof is in the Facts

In May, Senate Democrats blocked an effective defense for the United States against ballistic missile attack. Following a filibuster, the Senate attempted to move forward on the bill, but only four Democrats joined all 55 Republicans in voting to end the filibuster, leaving the Senate one vote shy of the 60 votes required (RVA #131, May 13, 1998). Since then, the following has occurred:

- ▶ In May, the U.S. intelligence community was surprised when India conducted a series of nuclear tests on the 11th and 13th of that month;
- ▶ In June, North Korea announced that it had and would continue to sell ballistic missiles and production technology to any interested buyer.
- ▶ In another surprise, despite intelligence estimates that Iran could not field its medium-range ballistic missile (the 800-940 mile range Shahab-3) until 2003, Iran flight-tested this system on July 22 of this year. The press has reported that Iran is also working on a longer-range version of this missile, the Shahab-4, with an expected range of 1,240 miles — capable of reaching Central Europe.
- ▶ Also, on July 15, a Congressionally mandated bipartisan commission concluded that the United States could get little or no warning of ballistic missile deployments from several emerging powers — contradicting the underlying assumption of the Clinton Administration's missile defense program;
- ▶ In August, North Korea flight-tested its Taepo Dong I missile, a significant development for two reasons. First, North Korea has now demonstrated the capability

to build two-stage missiles (significant because adding stages increases missile range). Second, North Korea's willingness to proliferate ballistic missiles — a point underscored by the presence of Iranians at the test (according to the *Washington Times*, 9/1/98) — means that other rogue nations stand to benefit from Pyongyang's breakthroughs.

Surprising the U.S. Intelligence Community

The Clinton Administration opposes S. 1873. In a letter to Senator Carl Levin (D-MI) on April 21 of this year, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Henry Shelton stated, "I disagree with the bill's contention that the U.S. ability to anticipate future ballistic missile threats is questionable. It is possible, of course, that there could be surprises, particularly were a rogue state to receive outside assistance. However, **given the substantial intelligence resources being devoted to this issue, I am confident that we will have the three years' warning on which our strategy is based.**" [NOTE: The "strategy" is the "3+3 deployment readiness program." This approach assumes the United States will get three years' advance warning, thus allowing three years to deploy a limited defense.]

General Shelton's assertions are belied by recent events. The Intelligence Community was caught by surprise when India conducted a series of nuclear explosions in May 1998. The failure to assess accurately events in India prior to the tests have been characterized by the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) as "colossal, because the Community missed something of such significance, something that has led to a new nuclear arms race in South Asia" [press release of Senator Richard Shelby, 6/2/98]. And an independent review, commissioned by the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), and led by the former Vice Chairman of the JCS, retired Navy Admiral David Jeremiah, pointed to problems in the Intelligence Community's assessments regarding India as "manifestations of broad strategic shortcomings."

It is not simply this one failure of intelligence that should have us worried. As summarized by Chairman Shelby, the report issued by Admiral Jeremiah cites a "disturbing pattern of complacency and poor performance within the analytical, collection, training and manning, and senior management elements of the Intelligence Community." Admiral Jeremiah's description of these shortfalls as *chronic* "raises serious questions about the ability of the Intelligence Community to perform its vital mission," concluded Chairman Shelby [press release, 6/2/98].

While the report is aimed at not only identifying the problems, but offering solutions to gain better intelligence assessments, DCI George Tenet offered this reality check at a recent SSCI hearing:

"We must recognize that improvements in these areas — however necessary — may not have assured that we could catch every nuclear test before it occurs. Foreign entities bent on developing nuclear, biological,

chemical and missile capabilities are taking steps to more effectively conceal their activities" [DCI George Tenet, testimony on the Jeremiah Report, 6/2/98].

And that's just what Iran did. In a February 5, 1998, letter to members on Capitol Hill, Deputy Defense Secretary John Hamre noted that "there is no consensus within the intelligence community on timing for [Iran's] fielding" the medium-range Shahab-3 ballistic missile; but that the likely best estimates range "as late as the year 2003" [*Washington Times*, 8/10/98]. To reassure Congress, Mr. Hamre said the Pentagon would plan for a worst-case scenario, under the assumption that Iran would test-fire the Shahab-3 no sooner than mid-1999. On July 21, 1998, five months after Secretary Hamre's letter, and one year earlier than he predicted, Iran test-fired the Shahab-3.

In a public acknowledgment of uncertainties in estimates regarding Iran's nuclear capabilities, Martin Indyk, assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, admitted that Iran has a clandestine nuclear weapons program:

"People tend to say that [a nuclear weapon capability] is many years off. Our assessments vary. I would want to be a bit cautious about that because I believe there are large gaps in our knowledge of what's going on there and because it's a clandestine program" [*Washington Times*, 7/29/98].

The Rumsfeld Report: Little or No Warning is Most Likely Scenario

Just three years ago, the CIA produced its National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), claiming that a threat from rogue ballistic missiles *to the 48 contiguous states* would be some 15 years away. But the NIE had doubters. One criticism was the limited focus, which excluded threats to Alaska and Hawaii. Another was the exclusion of "foreign assistance" and suggestion that such assistance is a "wild card." The NIE's rosy scenario prompted Congress, in its FY 1997 Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 104-201), to establish a bipartisan, independent commission to assess the nature and magnitude of the existing and emerging ballistic missile threat to the United States.

In its July 15, 1998, unclassified executive summary, the commissioners came to a unanimous conclusion contradicting the NIE:

"Concerted efforts by a number of overtly or potentially hostile nations to acquire ballistic missiles with biological or nuclear payloads pose a growing threat to the United States, its deployed forces and its friends and allies. These newer, developing threats in North Korea, Iran and Iraq are in addition to those still posed by the existing ballistic missile arsenals of Russia and China, nations with which we are not now in conflict but which remain in uncertain transitions. The newer ballistic missile-equipped nations' capabilities will not match those of U.S. systems for accuracy or reliability. However, *they would be able to inflict major destruction on the U.S. within about five years of a decision to acquire such a capability (10 years in the case of Iraq). During several of those years, the U.S. might not be aware that such a decision had*

been made" [Executive Summary of the Report of the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States (commonly referred to as the Rumsfeld Report, p. 3].

Equally disturbing was the Commission's finding that such threats may not be identified or identifiable, creating little or no warning before a rogue country's missiles become operational and whether the nature of the threat will be perceived clearly enough in time to take appropriate action:

"The warning times the U.S. can expect of new, threatening ballistic missile deployments are being reduced. Under some plausible scenarios — including re-basing or transfer of operational missile, sea- and air-launch options, shortened development programs that might include testing in a third country, or some combination of these — *the U.S. might well have little or no warning before operational deployment*" [Rumsfeld Report, p. 3].

The commission unanimously recommended that "U.S. analyses, practices and policies that depend on expectation of extended warning of deployment be reviewed and, as appropriate, revised to reflect the reality of an environment in which there may be little or no warning" [Report, p. 3]. These sobering conclusions should prompt not only Democrats but the Clinton Administration to abandon the current 3+3 national missile defense program as too little, too late. As General Howell M. Estes, former commander-in-chief, U.S. Space Command, recently stated, "the time to sort that out, to have a protective system in place, is not after we have an impact on U.S. soil" [*Washington Times*, 7/30/98].

Finally, the Rumsfeld Report identified three crucial factors currently shaping new ballistic missile threats to the United States. One was that, "a nation that wants to develop ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction can now obtain extensive technical assistance from outside sources. *Foreign assistance is not a wild card. It is a fact*" [Rumsfeld Report, p. 3]. Clinton Administration officials have often admitted, as General Shelton did recently, that "there could be surprises, particularly were a rogue state to receive outside assistance" [letter to Senator Carl Levin, 4/21/98]. Yet in the very next breath, they dismiss the very possibility to which they had previously admitted. The Rumsfeld report's emphatic conclusion that foreign assistance is a fact and not a "wild card" provides ample evidence for the Administration to move forward in deploying a limited anti-ballistic missile system, as intended by S. 1873.

North Korea: A Force to Be Reckoned With

Only two days ago, North Korea launched a two-stage missile (the Taepo Dong I, with a range capable of hitting almost any target in Japan and most cities in China), marking a significant step forward in its rocket technology. This is the first time Pyongyang has tested such a missile, proving it has overcome the host of technical hurdles accompanying a two-stage missile.

The implications are ominous: with this test, North Korea has crossed the last bridge to an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) capability, since the successful demonstration of staging technology is the last major hurdle to such a capability. In fact, *Jane's Strategic Weapon Systems* has reported that North Korea is developing a more powerful version of the Taepo Dong that may be able to fly 6,000 kilometers (3,750 miles), far enough to hit southern Alaska [*AP Worldstream*, 8/31/98].

And if past experience is any guide, it is entirely possible that within a short period of time, North Korea will operationally deploy the Taepo Dong, since Pyongyang deployed its No Dong missile after just one test flight. And it is equally likely that, given past experience, the Taepo Dong could soon be sold on the international market, since Pyongyang found buyers in Iran and Pakistan for the No Dong missile after just one flight test. In this respect, it is interesting to note that Iranians were present during the recent test of the Taepo Dong missile.

S. 1873 — Now More Than Ever

On May 13, 1998, all Senate Democrats save four voted against ending their filibuster on S. 1873, the American Missile Protection Act. S. 1873 is a bipartisan bill aimed at addressing the threat of limited ballistic missile attacks, whether accidental, unauthorized or deliberate.

Such Democrat obstructionism on the missile defense issue is not new. In June of 1996, the Senate considered a bill which would have established a U.S. policy for the deployment of a national missile defense system by the end of 2003. Every Democrat with only one exception voted to filibuster that bill.

Much has happened on the proliferation front since 1996. In just the last few months, the need for a national missile defense system, as outlined in S. 1873, has become more urgent while current analyses contradict the assumptions upon which the Clinton Administration has based its missile defense program. But 41 Democrats persist in blocking S. 1873 from floor consideration. What is it about this bill the Democrats find so frightening that they are afraid to debate and try to amend it? Only one Democrat vote stands in the way of defending the American people from a ballistic missile attack.

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